

Support for care experienced young people in Milton Keynes

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1. What is the local offer?

Our Local Offer is all about the services and support available to you as you move on to adulthood. It includes information about what we must provide you by law as well as the extra support we will offer. We know that it is a big step when you move out of care and start living on your own or with others and we want you to know that we still care. This is not a journey you have to take on your own and through our local offer we commit to standing alongside you.

Milton Keynes fully supports the seven corporate parenting principles set out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017

- To act in your best interests, and promote your physical and mental health and well-being
- To encourage you to express your views, wishes and feelings,
- To take into account your views wishes and feelings
- To help you gain access to, and make the best use of services
- To promote high aspirations for you and seek to secure the best outcomes for you
- For you to be safe and have stability in your home, relationships and education or work
- To prepare you for adulthood and interdependent living

We will celebrate your successes, but also support you when things are not going so well or when you need that additional help to reach a given goal. You may need support to gain the skills and confidence to live an interdependent life, or you may want someone to talk to when the going gets tough or someone to share your thoughts and views with.

Milton Keynes Care Experienced Young People Pledge

This pledge is a promise to all Milton Keynes Care experienced young people. It tells those who work with you what they should be doing to support you.

You are wonderful – we will value you for who you are, celebrate your successes and always be there for you

Successful – we will support you to achieve your goals in gaining and keeping yourself in education, employment, or training

Housing – we will support you through the processes of deciding what accommodation you would like and then securing those. We will be open and honest about the options, decisions and processes relating to your independence skills and housing

Healthy – we will support you to achieve the best health and wellbeing that you can, both physically and mentally

We want the best for you – we will aim high for you, and help you to achieve the successes you want to

We will tell you what's going on – we will listen to you, our aim for you to make your own decisions, but when we need to, we will make decisions based on what you are saying, and we will tell you what decisions are made and the reasons why

You will be able to look after yourself well when you become an adult – we will support you to be ready for interdependence with life skills and with confidence to deal with the challenges that life and adulthood face

Local care experienced young people have helped make this leaflet. If you would like to see the Local offer in a different format please access this at <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/children-young-people-and-families/care-leavers-hub>

We will continue to want to hear your views to make sure the services we offer are what you need. If you have any ideas or what like to be a part of our Raise Your Voice forum please contact RYV@milton-keynes.gov.uk

2. Who is a Care experienced young person?

There are different types of Care experienced young people depending on when and how long you have been in care; the following describes the 4 different categories:

- Eligible child is a child aged 16 and 17 who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who is still being looked after. As an eligible child you will be allocated a Social Worker who will complete an assessment of your needs and a Pathway Plan with you, providing support with accommodation, education, contact with your family and help to prepare you for independence as an adult.
- Relevant child is a child aged 16 and 17 who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who has left care. This also includes young people who were detained (e.g., in a youth offending institution or hospital) when they turned 16, but who were looked after immediately before being detained. If you have been in care as an eligible child you will continue to be supported in the same way but have an allocated Personal Advisor, instead of a Social Worker. If you have not been in care for a period of 6 months as you returned to live with your parents, you will qualify for advice and assistance.
- Former relevant child is a young person over 18 who was previously 'eligible' or 'relevant'. You will be supported until aged 21, or longer if there is a need and you are wish to continue having an allocated PA. As a former relevant care leaver, you will be allocated a PA who will give you advice and support, and regularly update your Pathway Plan.
- Qualifying child is any young person under 21 (or 24 if in education or training) who stops being looked after or accommodated in a variety of other settings, or being privately fostered, after the age of 16. This also includes young people who are under a special guardianship order. As a qualifying care leaver, you will be able to access advice and guidance.

It might be confusing to work out which one of these applies to you. To help you with this [you can use this tool](#) created by Coram Voice to work it out.

A Personal Advisor:

Following changes introduced through the Children & Social Work Act 2017, you will be able to ask to have support from your personal advisor up to the age of 25, whether you are in education or training or not. This is to make sure care leavers receive similar support to young adults who live with their families. Your personal advisor is there to help you to prepare to live interdependently and to offer advice and support after you leave care.

Our Personal Advisors are experienced, enthusiastic, and committed team. They are trained in Motivational Interviewing, understanding your benefits, mental health and supporting you with accessing the right accommodation. Your personal advisor will be happy to talk with you about the information in this leaflet.

Pathway Planning for your future:

Just before you turn 16, your social worker will complete an assessment of your needs with you. This will help to form your first Pathway Plan which will be in place on your 16th birthday. The Pathway Plan through discussion with you will highlight what your needs are and set out what your goals and aspirations you have for your future and what support you will need in achieving them. Your Pathway Plan is written by the local

authority after consultation with you and important people in your life. We review your Pathway Plan with you every 6 months so that it is kept up to date.

Your right to be heard and taken seriously:

You have a right to be involved in all decisions about your plans for leaving care. You also have a right to support from an independent advocate if you are thinking about challenging decisions about the care or support you receive.

Independent advocates can inform you about your rights and help you to be heard in meetings. They are separate from Children's Social Care. You can speak to your Personal Advisor about an advocate or self-refer using this link - MKadvocacy@reconstruct.co.uk

Leaving care before turning 18:

If you choose to leave care, this decision will be considered by all significant people in your life and at your Child in Care Statutory Review, which is a meeting that reviews your Pathway Plan. You may already be living at home on a Care Order (an order where the Children's Social Care hold Parental Responsibility with you Parent(s)) and means you are under the care of the Local Authority. Where appropriate, we will work with you and assess whether the Care Order should be ended so that you are no longer in care. If you choose to leave care before age 18, the law says we must provide you with suitable accommodation and consider whether you meet the criteria for support following care. You can talk to your Social Worker more about this who will be able to offer advise.

16 -17 years old - services available to you:

Your Social Worker and Personal Advisor will work with you to ensure you are prepared for the transition to adulthood at 18. Your social worker will visit you as agreed in your Pathway Plan and if you need more support, they can visit you more often. You can contact your social worker and Personal Advisor at any time to talk about plans for the future, ask any questions or seek advice and support.

We will ensure you have suitable accommodation and your needs are met.

During this time you will be encouraged to attend our 'Next Steps' program where you are supported to develop skills which will help you in adulthood.

You have the option to be a member of our 'Raise your Voice' forum. This is a space for care experienced young people to have their say and influence council decision making.

You will receive financial assistance for a number of things, including driving lessons. The details can be found in our financial policy. [Care Experienced Young Peoples Financial Policy Signed off MH \(milton-keynes.gov.uk\)](#)

3. Support we offer 18 – 25 year olds

Health and Wellbeing:

We want to help you to stay as healthy as possible, physically, and emotionally and will provide you with support to do so.

Milton Keynes will offer you:

- Advice and information on healthy living.
- Support you with guidance on getting help to pay for prescriptions.
- Support you to register with a GP.
- Support you to move from CAMHS to adult services.
- Give information about counselling services that are available locally.
- Give you help with transports costs when attending health appointments.
- If you are a young parent, we will take an interest in your child/children and support you to do the best for them. We will help you arrange childcare if this is what you want.
- We will consider offering you financial support to initially start a hobby. Your PA will support you with a longer term plan for sustaining this.
- Give you information about health drop-in centres.

We have a Weekly football training session you can join

We will help you get information and access support services if you want information or are worried about your use of alcohol and/or drug use

If you need emotional or practical support in making and attending a health appointment, then your PA would be happy to discuss how we can assist. In some situations, you may like to PA to attend with you which can be arranged

During your time in care a health passport was put together. You will be given this at your last health review or in the post if you did not attend. This is a personalized document which tells you about your health history. If you are unsure about the content of your health passport or have any questions relating to it then one of our Looked After Children's nurses would be able to look at this with you

We have a monthly drop in session where you can speak to a nurse who can offer advice and guidance.

There are many different routes we can support you to access support with your mental health, 3 of which are:

1. Speaking to the GP or a counselor
2. Looking at an intervention plan with our primary mental health workers
3. Referral to adult mental health services

We run friendly group work sessions which include a focus on; wellbeing, mindfulness, meditation, relaxation techniques and self esteem

Cooking and healthy eating workshops are offered to all care experienced young people, alongside budgeting support.

You can also get access to our cookbook designed by young people and includes healthy recipes

Your sexual health is important. We can support you in attending ICASH and/or locating your nearest c card.

Supporting your Relationships:

We know that having a network of personal and professional support can really make a difference on your journey to adulthood and interdependence. As well as support from a personal advisor, we may be able to offer you additional practical and emotional support.

Where appropriate we may be able to support you financially with visiting your support network up to 4 times a year until you are 21 years old. This can be discussed and agreed in your pathway plan.

We can provide you with a mentor or peer mentor.

Where appropriate we can support you to stay in touch with your independent visitor.

We can help you to maintain or regain contact with people special to you or who cared for you in the past, like former foster carers or Social Workers.

Before you leave care, we will look at the support networks you have and how we can help you maintain and sustain these positive important relationships in your life.

Healthy relationships and domestic abuse. We can offer you support and information about healthy relationships. We can help you access support services for domestic abuse.

You have a right to see the information we keep about you, including the files and records written about you when you were in care. You can access your files mail to: data.protection@milton-keynes.gov.uk

If you chose to view your files, we would like to support you with this. Looking through reports written about you and your family can be difficult to read. It is important that you discuss the support you would like with a Personal Advisor so that you don't feel alone at this time. We do however respect that it is your choice how, if and when you choose to access your record and we will listen to your wishes.

Accommodation:

We want to ensure that you have the right support with accommodation. Setting up your home is an important step for you. We want to help you be prepared for this to enable you to have every success. We will ensure you have the opportunity to learn and develop your interdependent living skills to prepare you for adulthood.

We will begin discussions with you around your 16th birthday about where you would like to live at 18 and what options are available to you.

Options may include:

If you are living with a foster family, you may decide you want to remain living with your foster family after you turn 18. This is called a '**Staying Put**' arrangement. We will arrange a meeting with you and your foster family to discuss these arrangements with you to ensure it runs smoothly.

Shared lives scheme is arranged through Adult Social Care. It is a scheme for more vulnerable adults who require that additional support and meet the eligibility criteria for an adult's service. Your PA will discuss with you whether this would be a suitable option for you.

Your own tenancy. We support all our young people to register a housing application with Milton Keynes housing after your 16th birthday. If you are not living in Milton Keynes or do not intend to when over 18 then we will explore all your housing options with you so you can make an informed decision about the route you wish to follow.

You may also wish to consider privately renting a property or saving for a mortgage. This can be discussed with your PA and will be reflected within your Pathway Plan.

If you are aged over 18, your personal advisor will help you to find suitable accommodation.

Your Personal Advisor will give you advice and support with the following:

Advice about holding a tenancy, including avoiding rent arrears, paying bills and budgeting. We know it can be very hard having your own place for the first time. We will do whatever we can to ease the pressures on you. As a Milton Keynes Care Leaver, you are exempt from paying Council Tax until your 25th birthday.

Helping you to claim universal credit. We will support you with appointments at the Job Centre if you need to make a benefits claim.

- Practical support with moving into and furnishing your new home. We will provide you with a setting up home allowance (details can found in Finance Policy).
- Supporting you if you have a housing crisis, this includes helping if you are threatened with or losing a tenancy.

When ready to move to your first tenancy we will support you in getting together money for a deposit and first month's rent if needed.

We will ensure you have a starter pack with many essential items and assist with the costs of your first week's shopping.

Your PA will support you in setting up and paying for your first years tv license if you need one, as well as 1 year's home contents insurance.

To help you prepare for your first tenancy we:

Offer workshops jointly with housing in Milton Keynes. For young people not living in Milton Keynes your PA or carer will be able to go through this learning with you. We work closely with housing to ensure you have all the right information to make an informed choice about your home.

If living in Milton Keynes, you will have priority banding for housing. This means that housing will priorities your application

If you have a housing crisis it is important that you tell us immediately so we can help, we may also be able to apply for additional tenancy support through adult Services.

In Milton Keynes City Council the 16-25 team work closely with Housing. There is a Joint Housing Policy in place for care experienced young people which can be viewed here.

[2.1 Joint housing protocol for care experienced young people.pdf \(milton-keynes.gov.uk\)](#)

Education, training, and employment:

We want you to achieve the best in life and have put in place support to help you do this. We will ensure that you can access up to date and impartial Careers Information, Advice and Guidance to help you make informed choices for your future. We want you to succeed in your education, training, and employment. We will ask you how you are doing and be ready to offer options and celebrate your achievements with you.

Services we provide for you include careers advice (for 16–25-year old's). We can also offer the following:

- If you attend University or further education / training you will get help with the cost of books and materials, in the form a bursary. If needed, we can help you to manage this and offer additional financial support if appropriate. Each establishment has a different agreement as to how much they will grant, so please speak to them directly about this or ask you PA to support you to do so.
- Initially we will support you to meet your transport costs when travelling to training, school/college, apprenticeships, or job interviews. This will be agreed and reviewed in your pathway plan
- Support to buy tools, equipment, essential clothing, and books.
- Support if you choose to go to university, such as helping you obtain tuition fees and maintenance loans and contributing towards the cost of your accommodation fees during holidays. We will help you choose the right course and university that matches your talents and interests.
- We will support you will a bursary of £2000 paid in installments when studying for your first degree.
- Opportunities for work experience, apprenticeships, and employment within the council.
- The chance to attend and help organize celebration events when young people achieve education, training, and employment milestones.
- Mentoring opportunities with the councils senior leadership team.
- We will regularly review this service with you to ensure that it continues to meet your needs.
- Careers fayres where local businesses come together to offer opportunities to care leavers.
- If not in education, training or Employment you will be allocated a careers advisor who can support you in putting together a CV, interview coaching, application writing and exploring opportunities.

Milton Keynes City Council offer an interview for all Milton Keynes care leavers with relevant experience and qualifications for the job they are applying for.

Milton Keynes is introducing a ringfenced apprentice position for care leavers.

Finances:

Knowing how to manage your money is an essential part of becoming interdependent.

We recognize how difficult this is and will help you learn how to do this. Your personal advisor, support worker or carer can help you access all benefits, student loans and bursaries available to you. Milton Keynes may also offer additional financial support where needed as set out in the care leavers finance policy.

Our aim is to support you to learn how to be financially independent. This includes being able to manage your money, understanding how to budget well, borrowing money safely, student loans and identity fraud.

We work closely with a work coach in Milton Keynes from the DWP. She can offer advice and guidance as well as a drop in session should you require it.

Our Finance policy can be found on our website <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/children-young-people-families/care-leavers-hub>

Having a good financial understanding will hopefully ensure you have the skills to manage your money independently.

'*Young Money Matters*' is a helpful guide to assisting young people manage and understand their money. Click on the link to access:

<https://www.young-money.org.uk/sites/default/files/Your%20Money%20Matters.pdf>

Our help includes:

- Providing a leaving care grant to help you buy essential things when moving into your own home, up to £3,000.
- Giving you exemptions on paying Council Tax.
- Providing or telling you about relevant money management courses.
- Information on how to access your Junior ISA, if you have one (a fund of money set aside by the government and the council).
- Support to open a bank account.
- Support to gain important identification documents, such as a passport, birth certificate and provisional driving license, before your 18th birthday.
- Support to get your National Insurance number.
- We work closely with a named worker at the DWP who can offer advice and guidance to Personal advisors and young people.
- We will consider requests for financial support to access training and work opportunities as detailed in the care leavers financial policy.
- We have a good relationship with many community groups offering services such as food bank, community fridges and larders. If you find yourself in need of accessing these services, then we can support you in doing this.
- Providing a financial gift at birthdays and Christmas or other celebrations.
- If you have received Criminal Injuries Compensation whilst in care, we will ensure we offer you independent financial advice to ensure you know how to invest this money for your future.

- We offer support with budgeting and understanding your financial responsibilities. It is important that if you get in debt you share your worries. Do not bottle these up as it can affect your mental health and we would like to try and help you.

Participation in Society:

We want our care leavers to be active members of society, and to have all the chances in life that other young adults have. We can help you participate in society in the following ways:

- Providing information on groups and clubs you may wish to join.
- Informing you about relevant awards, schemes, and competitions you can enter, in line with your talents and interests.
- Encouraging and helping you to enroll on the Electoral Register, so you can vote in elections.
- Offering work experience with our councillors.
- Informing you about voluntary work that we think you may be interested in.
- Informing and possibly helping with the cost of leisure activities.
- Advice and help to challenge any discrimination you face as a care leaver.
- Being involved with the Children in Care Council and Care Leaver Forum
- Being involved in consultation work with the council
- We offer monthly social groups as well as other activities throughout the year.

Richard Lee is our Participation Team Leader; you can contact him at: Richard.Lee@milton-keynes.gov.uk

For young people who came to Milton Keynes as unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, we can support you to access groups such as 'New2UK' where emotional and practical support will be given by professionals and peers. If needed, we can support you to access counselling. We work closely with organisations such as the red cross and the refugee council and can assist you in accessing their services.

We understand that for some young people there are difficulties and challenges which can result in negative outcomes. If you are a Milton Keynes care experienced young person in custody, we will maintain contact with you offering visits, phone calls and emails. We can work with your offender manager to ensure your needs are being met and we will help you prepare for your release in the community.

We know how important it is to maintain contact with positive important people whilst in custody and if appropriate we can support you with a weekly allowance to maintain phone credit. This is detailed in the financial policy.

Other options at 21 years old

At this point you'll probably have less contact with us. So while your regular pathway plan may not continue and your main source of financial and welfare support is now provided in the same way as it is other young adults you can still ask us for help if you need it.

We'll also encourage other agencies to contact the 16+ team if they feel that you need support.

You may decide you no longer want a PA at 21. This is ok and will be respected. We will continue to contact you once a year unless you request we stop, to remind you of the support we can offer, see how you are and share our contact details. But you don't need to wait for us to get in touch. If you need help contact us.

16-21 years old and you 'Qualify' for support.

You qualify for support if you've been in care for less than 13 weeks since your 14th Birthday, but you have been in care aged 16 and/or 17 years old. Qualifying also applies to specific groups, e.g. you were previously privately fostered before the age of 16 or you were in care before a Special Guardianship order was granted. If you are unsure whether this applies to you then please contact us and we can talk it through.

We would like to help support you to plan for your future:

- We'll allocate you a Personal Advisor to offer advice and guidance
- We'll provide you with information, advice and assistance, and guide you to relevant resources to access the support you need.

4. Who can help?

Key contact details:

- 16-25 team: 01908 253434 (Duty PA)
- Housing advice – Civic Office - a Housing Support Officer will be able to assist 01908 253481 (Housing Options Team)

Other places you can go for help:

- Princes Trust - <https://www.princes-trust.org.uk/>
- The Rees Foundation - <http://www.reesfoundation.org/>
- Care Leavers' Foundation - <http://www.thecareleaversfoundation.org/>

Relevant universal services:

- iCASH Sexual Health Services: <https://www.icash.nhs.uk/where-to-go/icash-milton-keynes>
 - Drug/alcohol support - ypdaservice@milton-keynes.gov.uk
 - Information regarding Higher education - <https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/universities/applying-to-university-as-a-care-leaver/>
 - Parenting support groups – www.MiltonKeynes.gov.uk/family-centres
 - Citizenship Advice Bureau - <https://www.miltonkeynescab.org.uk/>
 - [Home - Women's Aid \(womensaid.org.uk\)](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)
 - [MK-ACT \(mkact.com\)](http://www.mkact.com)
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You can call us on 01908 691691

Our customer service team are available 9.00am to 5.15pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and 10.00am to 5.15pm on Wednesday

Our website is always available
www.milton-keynes.gov.uk

